

ON THE LINE:

Ho: 'Why Fight Santa Claus?'

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By BOB CONSIDINE

IF OLD HO CHI MINH comes arunning to the conference table pretty soon the chances are that he'll be propelled more by the prospect of American dollars than the fear of American bombs.

LBJ's promise of massive economic development for that part of the world which includes both North and South Viet Nam could prove to be as decisive a weapon as the A-bomb was in the war against Japan. We have an unblemished record of forgiving and forgetting, for flattening an opponent and then picking him up, dusting him off, and setting him up in business so he can undersell us. Billions of dollars went into the task of breathing life back into Italy, West Germany and Japan—three dire foes who cost us a million casualties and \$330 billion in goods and services.

We'd do the same for North Viet Nam in a minute. Nobody knows that better than Ho. If he gets himself too deep in this war he has every right to expect to see most or all of his hard-won industrial complexes blown to rubbish. In such an extremity, he'd probably be forced to call openly on Red China for help, and that would mean the end of his little country, and of him.

The President's speech offered him an opportunity to say to his people, "Why fight Santa Claus?"

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I SEE NOTHING shameful about using the lever of the dollar. It's a cleaner weapon than the A-bomb and better cricket than nausea fumes. It saves lives, gives enemies pause, and tends to make friends, though not invariably this practice is denounced at times as "dollar diplomacy," just as the missionaries were once accused of converting vast assemblies of "rice



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Christians." But there's an element of stubborn good heartedness in there, too, and that never hurt either side in any war or dialogue.

The revelation by Sen. Milton Young (R.-N. D.) that the CIA has on its payroll a number of high ranking Communist officials, who are paid to keep the U. S. informed on what's cooking in the conspiracy against freedom, made us wince a bit at first sight. But, as the Senator pointed out in his matter-of-fact way, we've got to know these things if we are to survive and there's no way that a hard-working American-born spy can get ahead in Communist governments. So we find a guy here, a guy there, who is venal or may not like the way things are running at home, and we open a numbered account for him in some nice bank in Geneva. Or wherever he wants it.

A prominent pro-American figure in Central America has proposed that the U. S. get rid of Fidel Castro by the simplest device employable.

"Put six of his top people on the payroll," he suggests. "Bank the money for them in Miami, not to be withdrawn until they dump him in the name of a free and democratic Cuba. It would be a lot cheaper and much less bloody than another Bay of Pigs. And quicker."

The dollar often plays the ultimate role in breaking tough criminal cases, and those who reap same are sometimes rubbed out for their stoolie roles. But justice gets served amid this sordid commerce. There is a solid community of Communist business men in the Soviet Union, and all through Eastern Europe that is as determined about doing business with the U. S. as some of their brethren are with burying us. They are prevailing, too.

The buck, like the old gray mare, may not be what it used to be. But it still has a helluva kick.

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